EDWARD DUDLEY HUGHES

Light sows a meagre beam

five settings of poems by Osip Mandelshtam

(1997)

Preview File Only

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commissioned by Jeremy Huw Williams
with funds from the Arts Council of Wales

Silentium

The breast of the sea heaves peacefully,
Like a lunatic the bright day sparkles,
And the spray is pale lilac
In a bowl of murky blue.

May my lips attain
Their original speechlessness,
A note high and clear,
Unsmirched by being born.

Remain as spray, Aphrodite,
And – word – return to music,
And – fused with life's foundation –
Heart, be ashamed of heart!

(14) 1910

I grew out of a dangerous swamp,
Rustling like a reed,
And – with rapture, languor, caresses –
Inhale a prohibited life.

In my cold and marshy refuge
No one notices me,
And I'm welcomed by the whisper
Of short autumn minutes.

I enjoy this cruel injury;
And in a life like a dream
Secretly I envy everybody,
Secretly am in love with the world.

(17) 1910

Light sows a meagre beam
Coldly in the sodden forest.
I carry slowly in my heart
The grey bird, sadness.

What shall I do with the wounded bird?
The earth is effaced, silent, dead.
From a belfry masked by mist
Somebody stole the bells.

The high air stands
Dumb and bereaved,
A white and empty tower
Of quietness and mist.

The morning's tenderness – half real,
Half reverie – is never-ending.
Miracle of drowsiness and lull;
Mist-like thoughts are ringing . . .

(21) 1911

Like the shadow of sudden clouds,
A sea-guest staggers past
And, rippling by, sighs
Along embarrassed shores.

An enormous sail austerely soars;
Dead-white, the wave shrinks back –
And once more will not dare
To touch the shore;

And the boat, rustling through the waves . . .

(16) 1910

How slowly the horses move,
How dark the light the lanterns throw!
Where they're taking me
These strange ones surely know.

I am cold, I want to sleep.
Confident of their concern,
Suddenly towards starlight
I'm thrown at the turn.

The nodding of a fevered head,
The caring icy hand of a stranger,
And – once more unseen by me –
Outlines of dark fir.

(20) 1911

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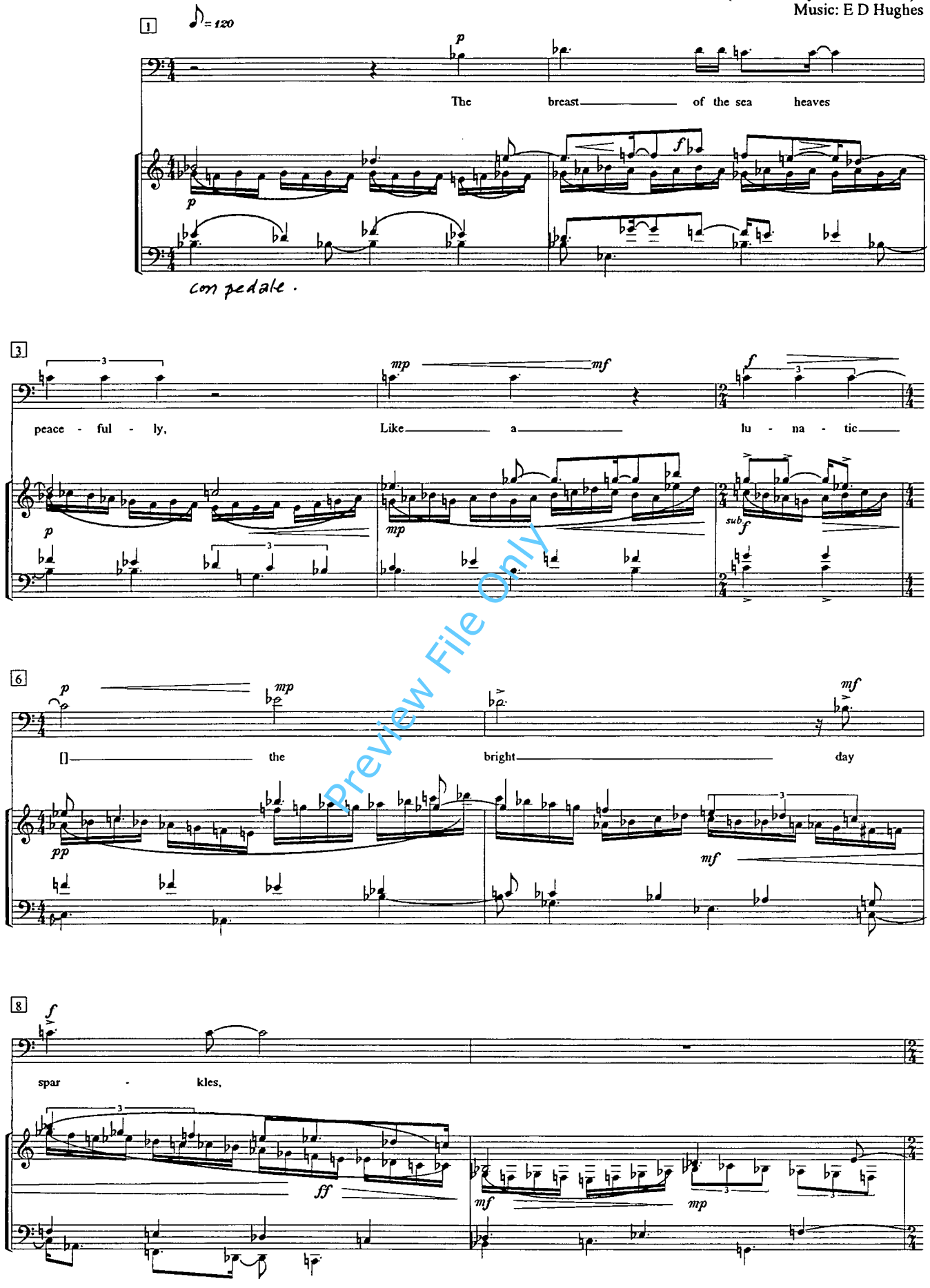
I

The breast of the sea heaves peacefully

Poem: Osip Mandelshtam
(translated by James Greene)*
Music: E D Hughes



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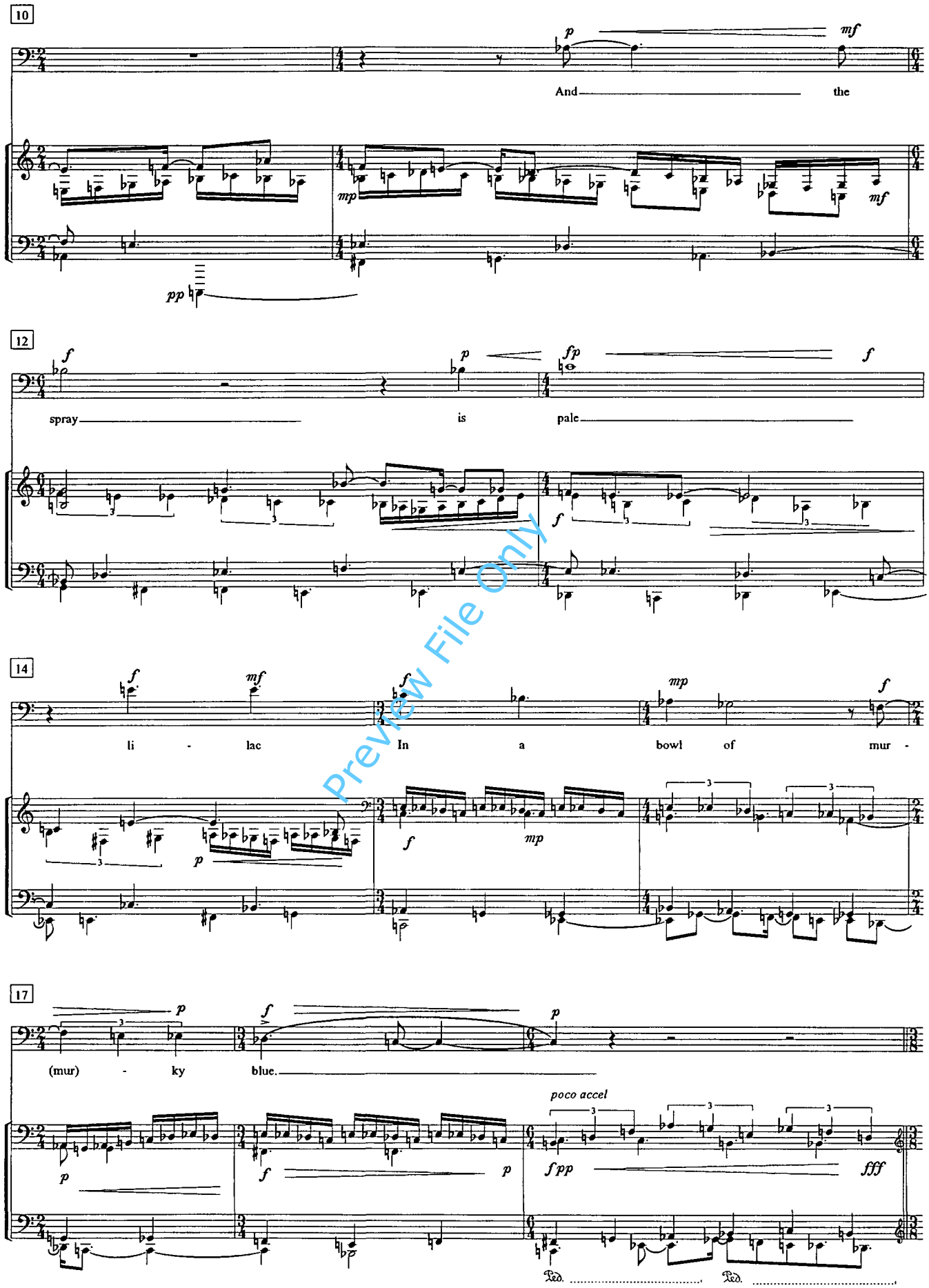

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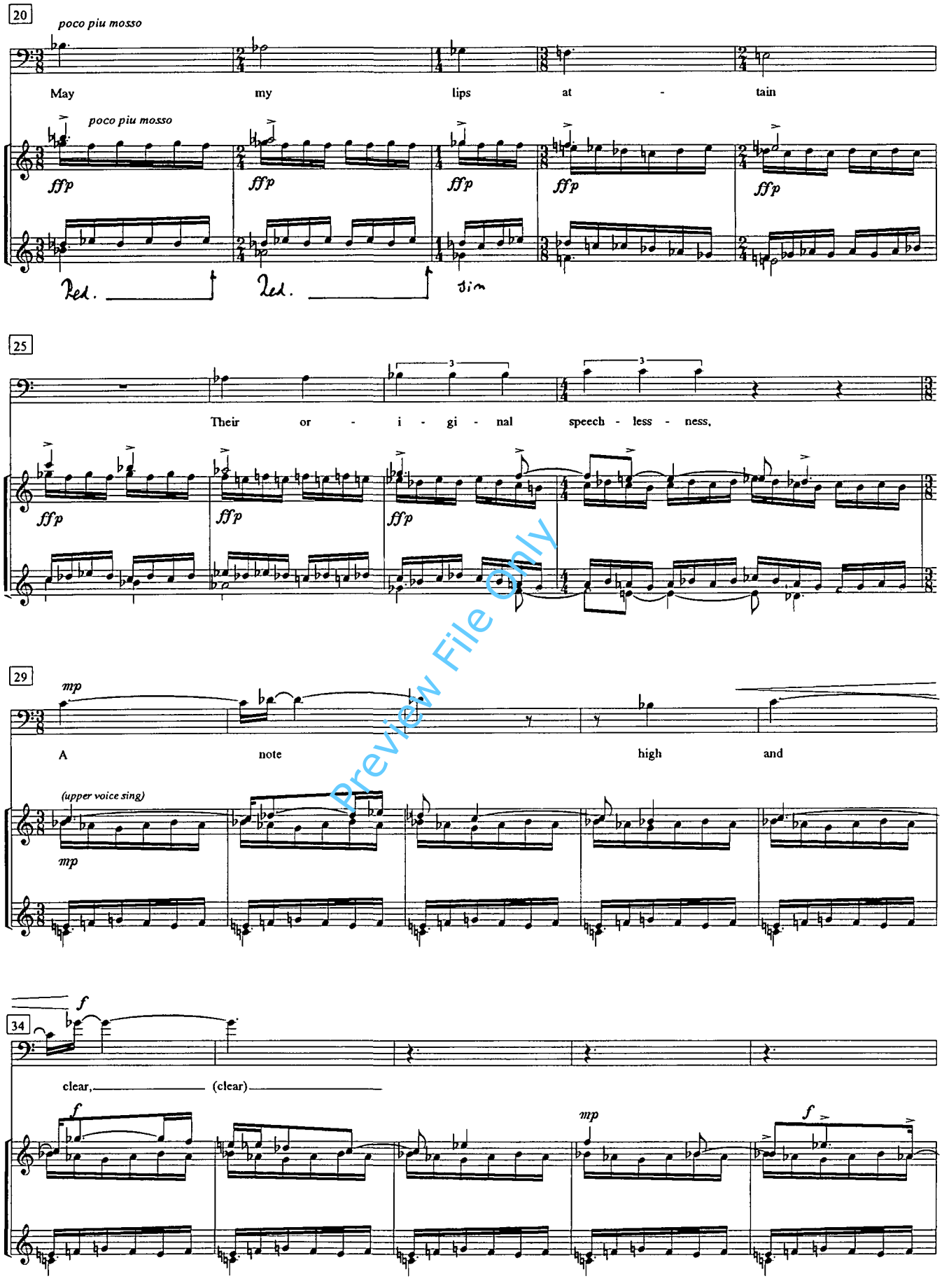

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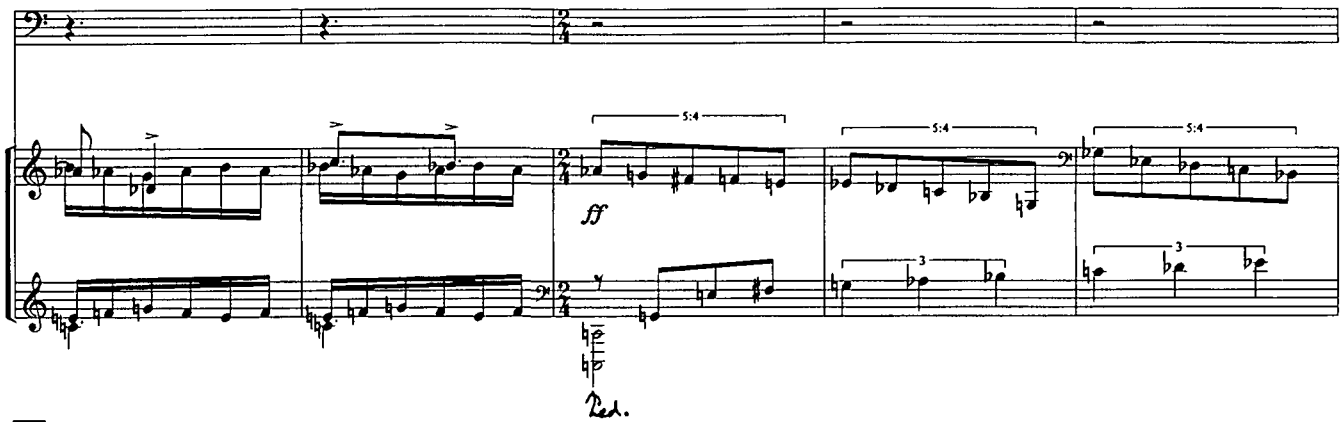

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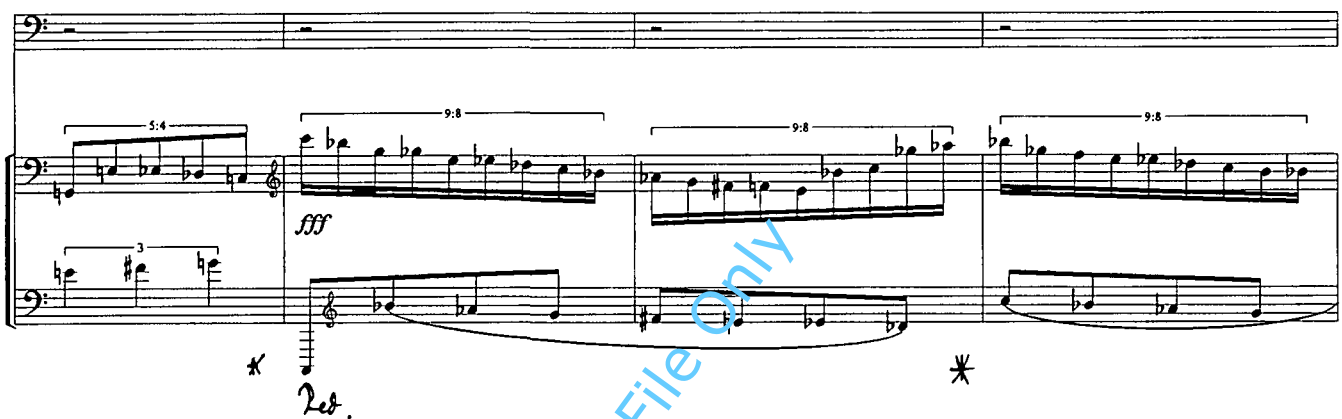

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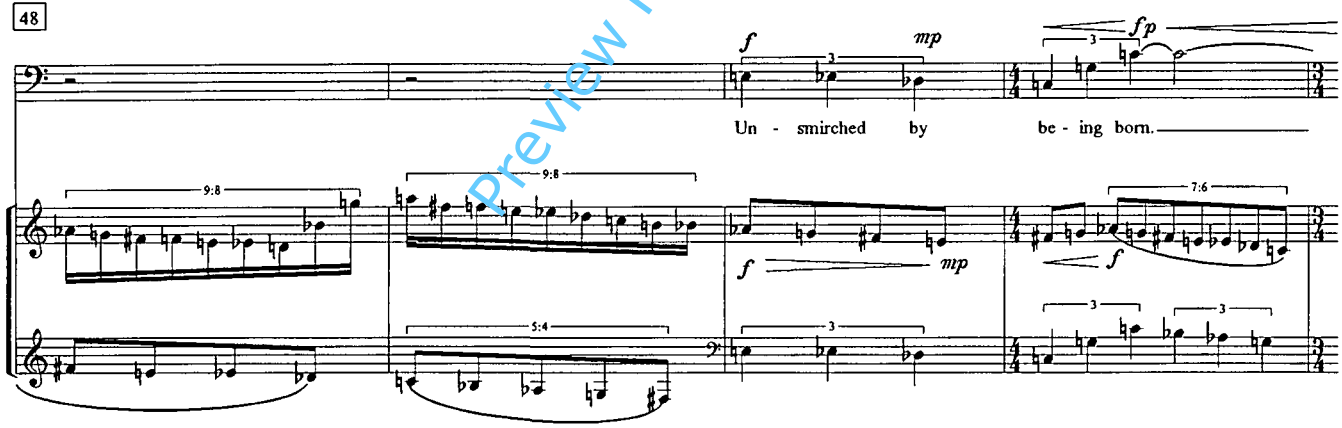

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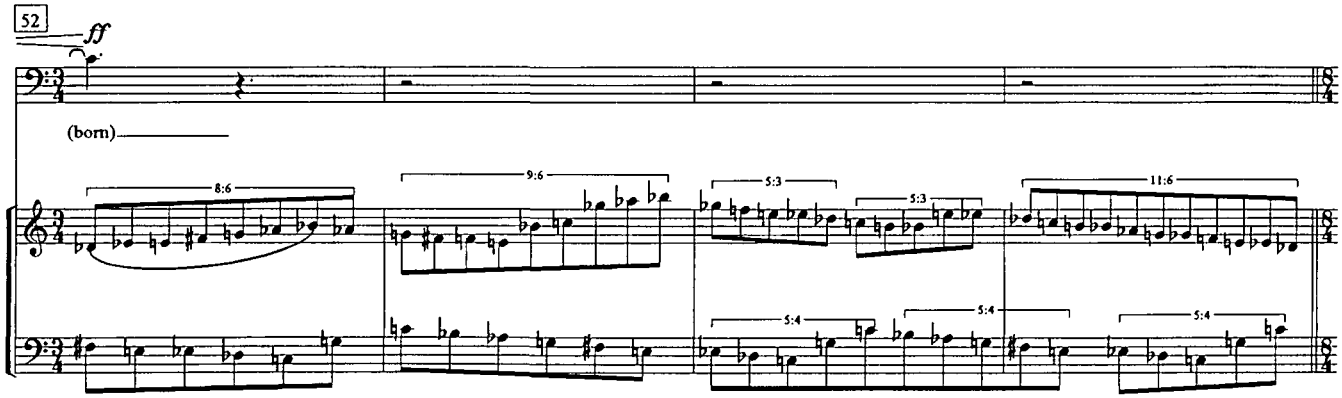

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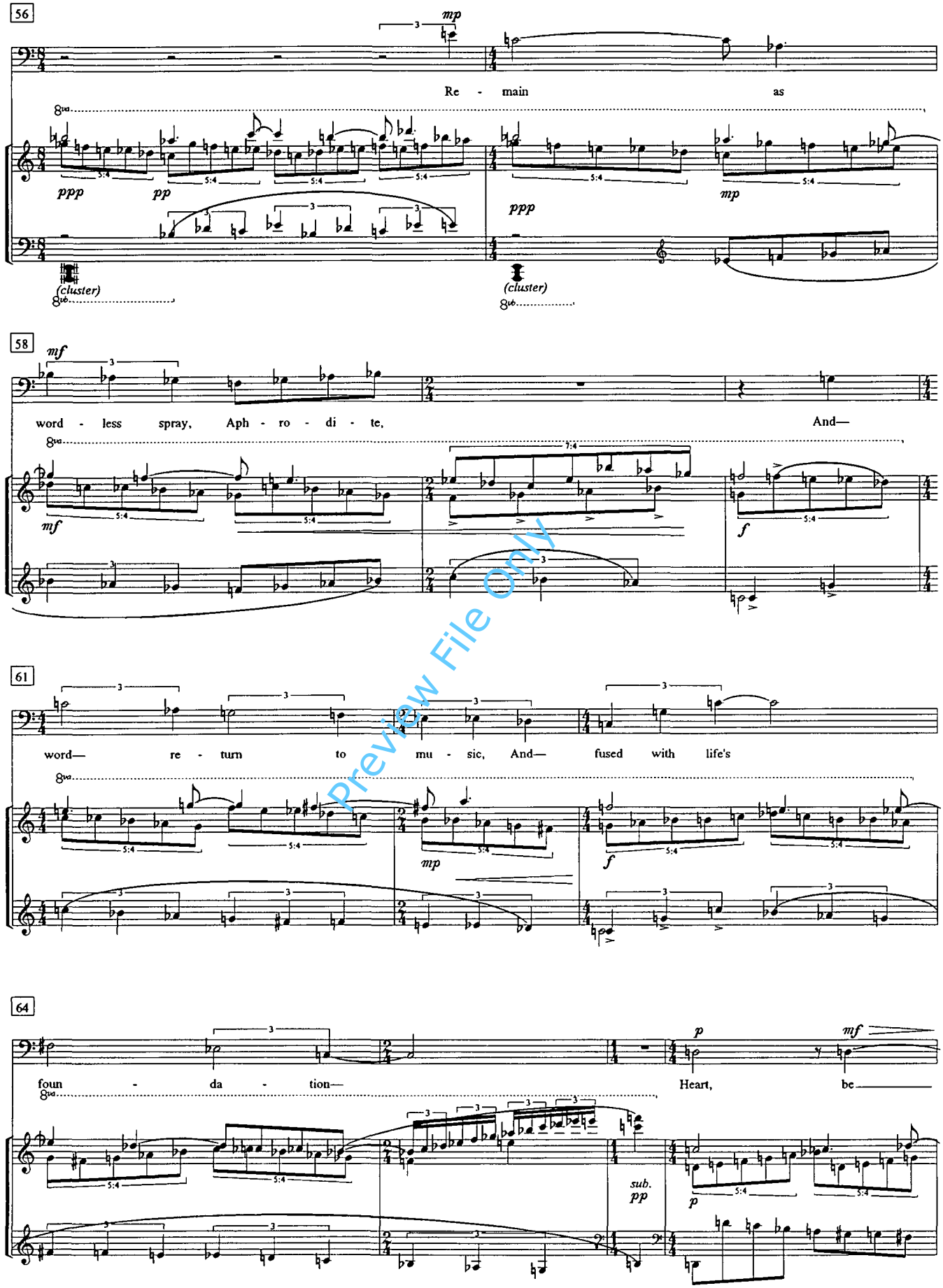

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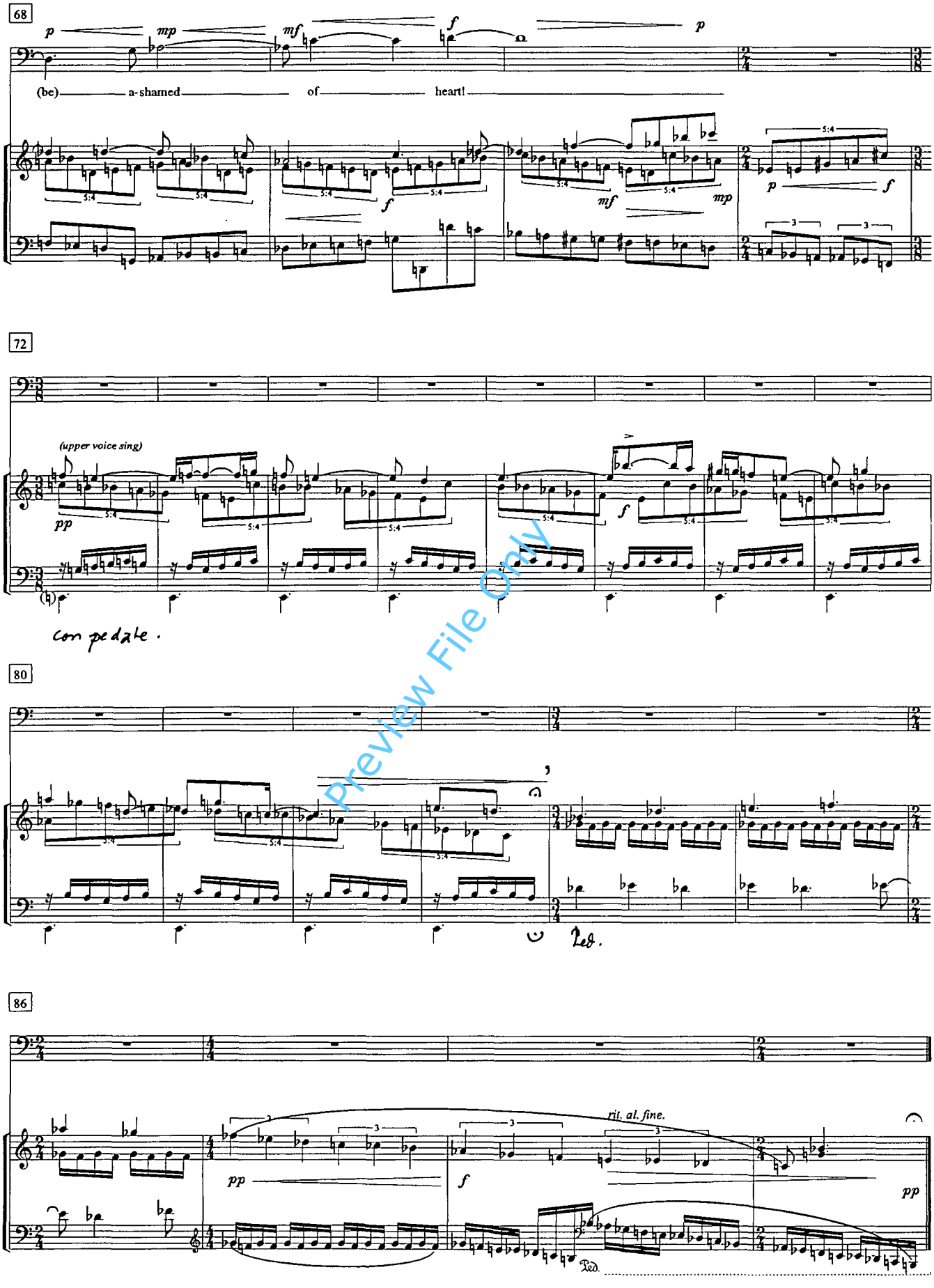

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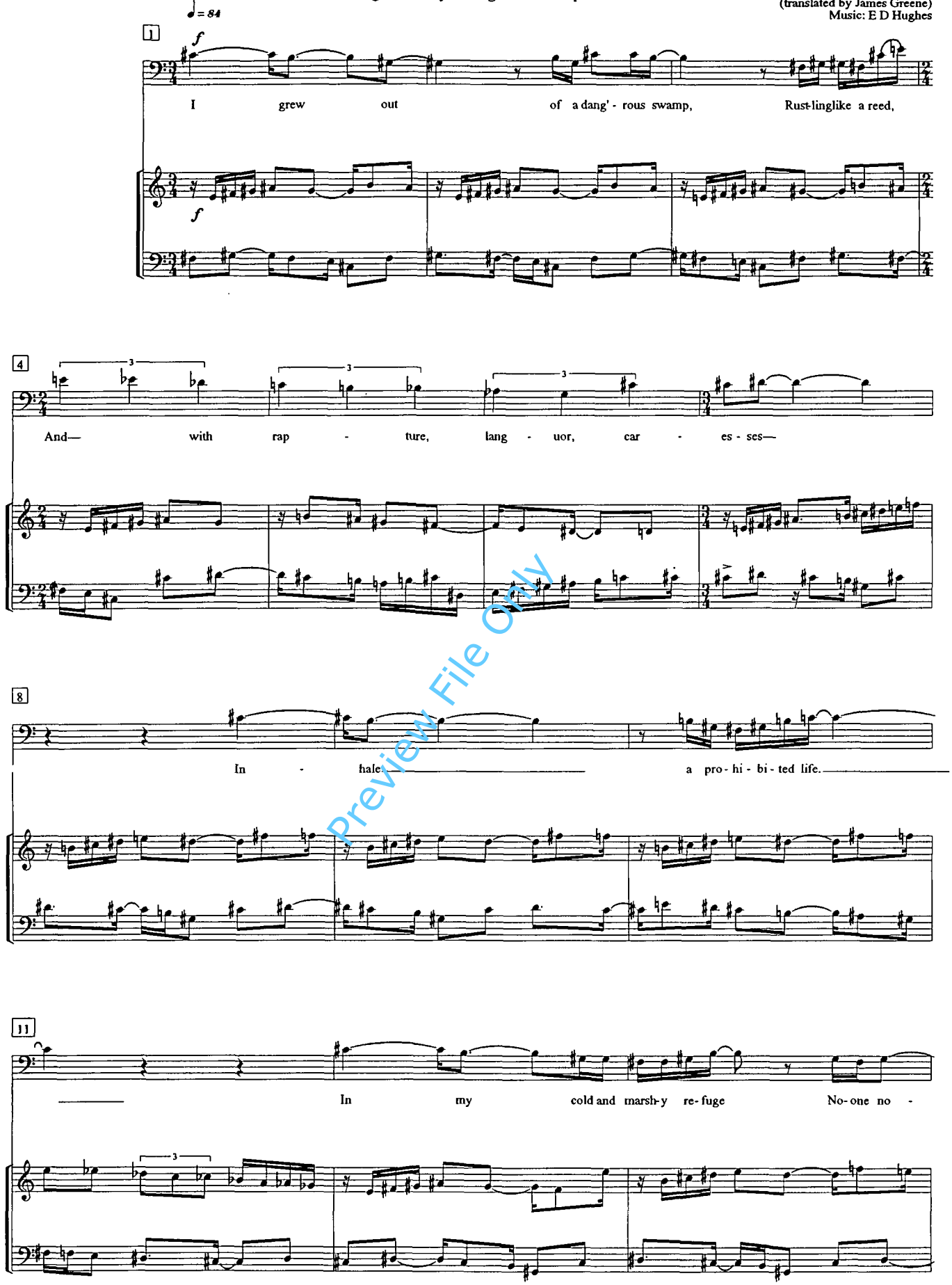
II

I grew out of a dangerous swamp

Poem: Osip Mandelshtam
(translated by James Greene)
Music: E D Hughes



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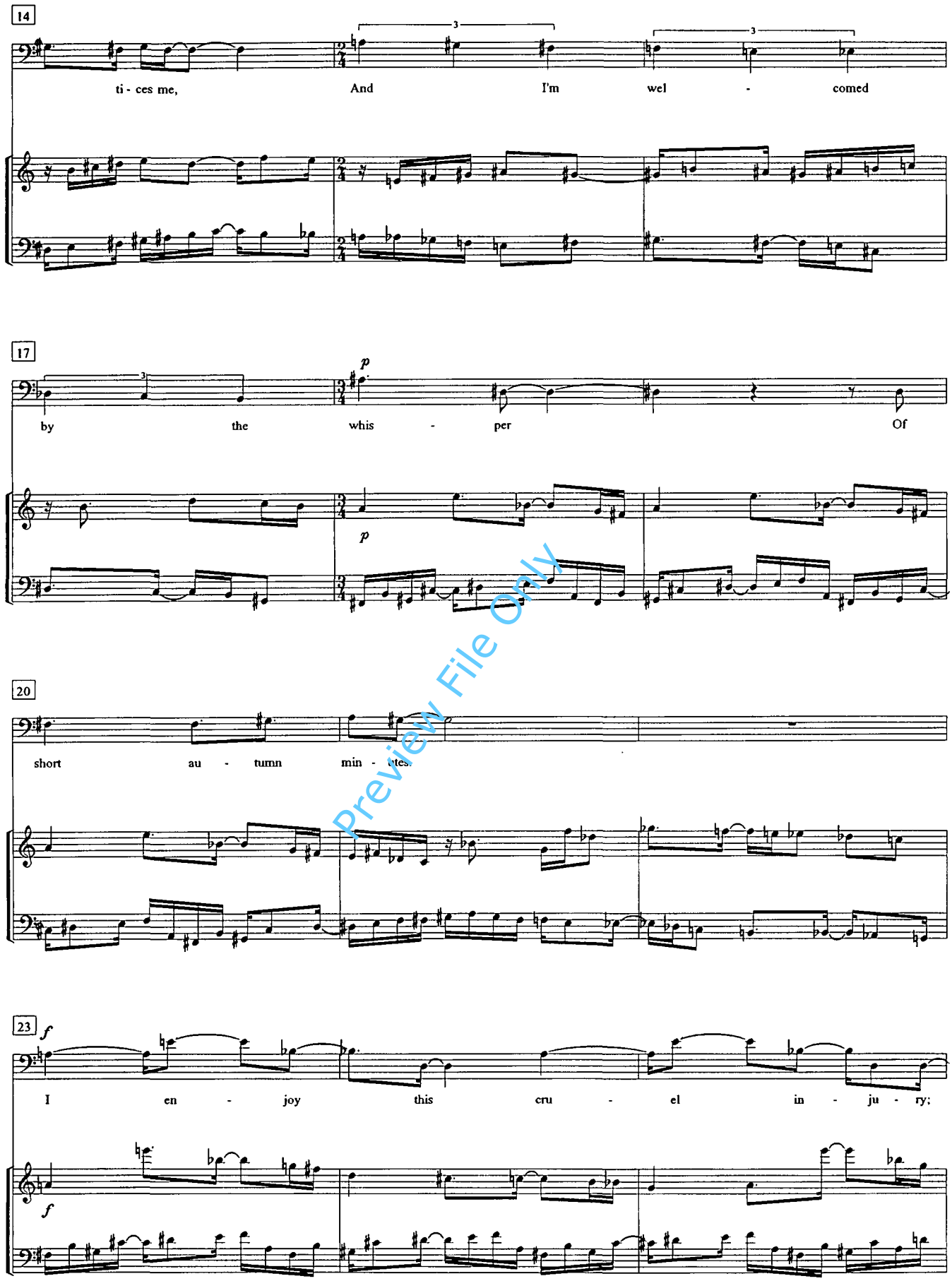

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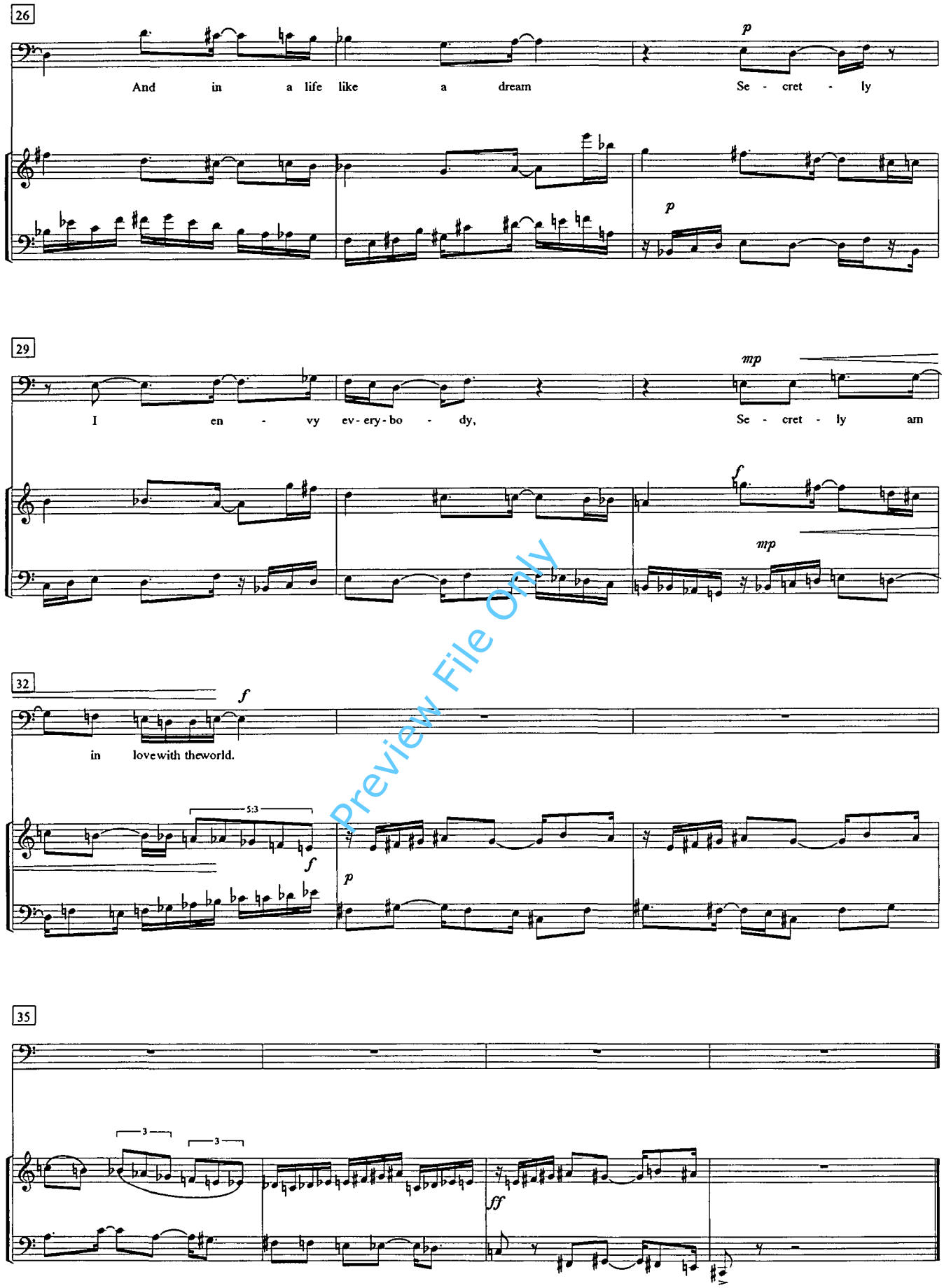

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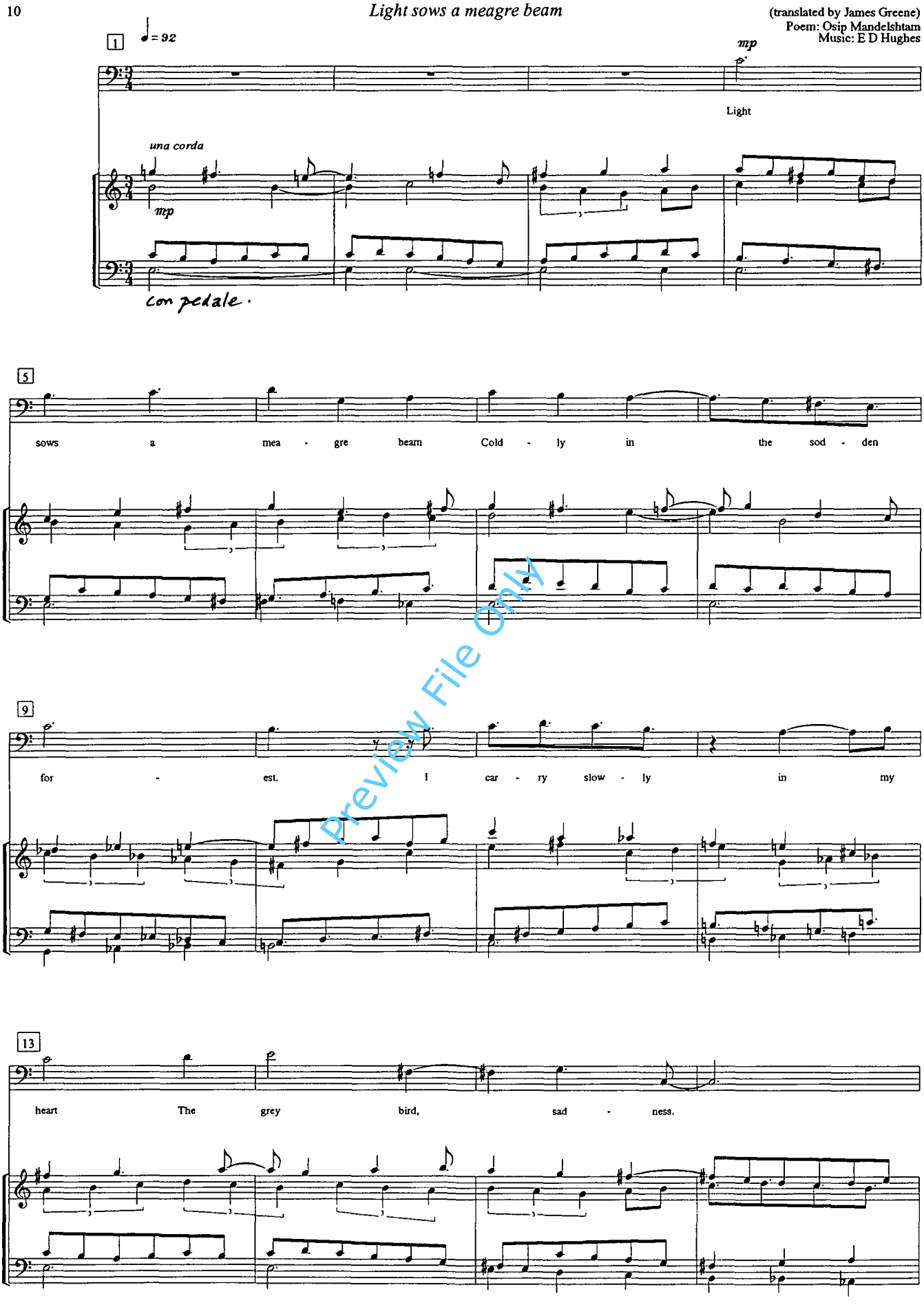
III

Light sows a meagre beam

(translated by James Greene)
Poem: Osip Mandelshtam
Music: E D Hughes



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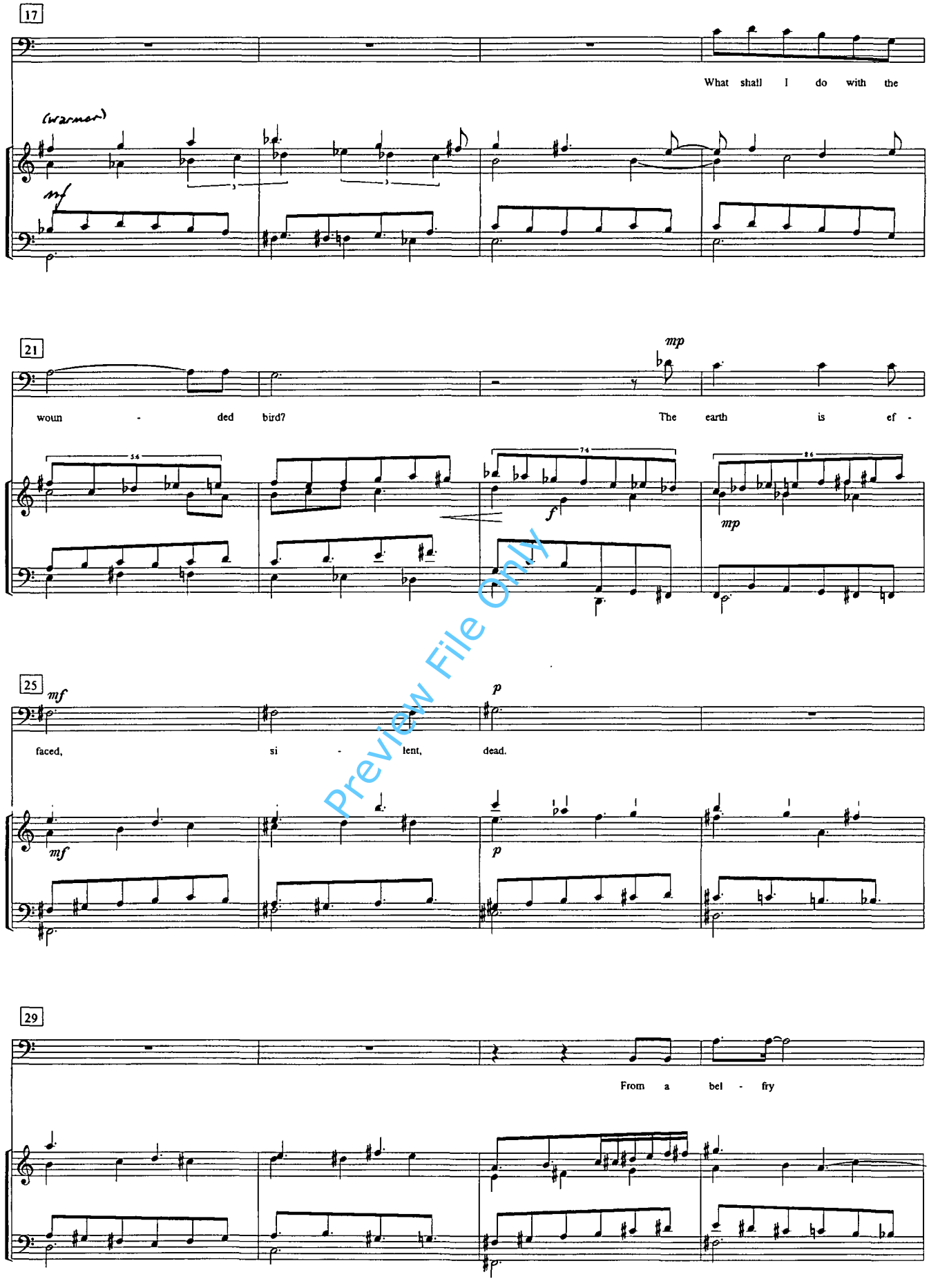

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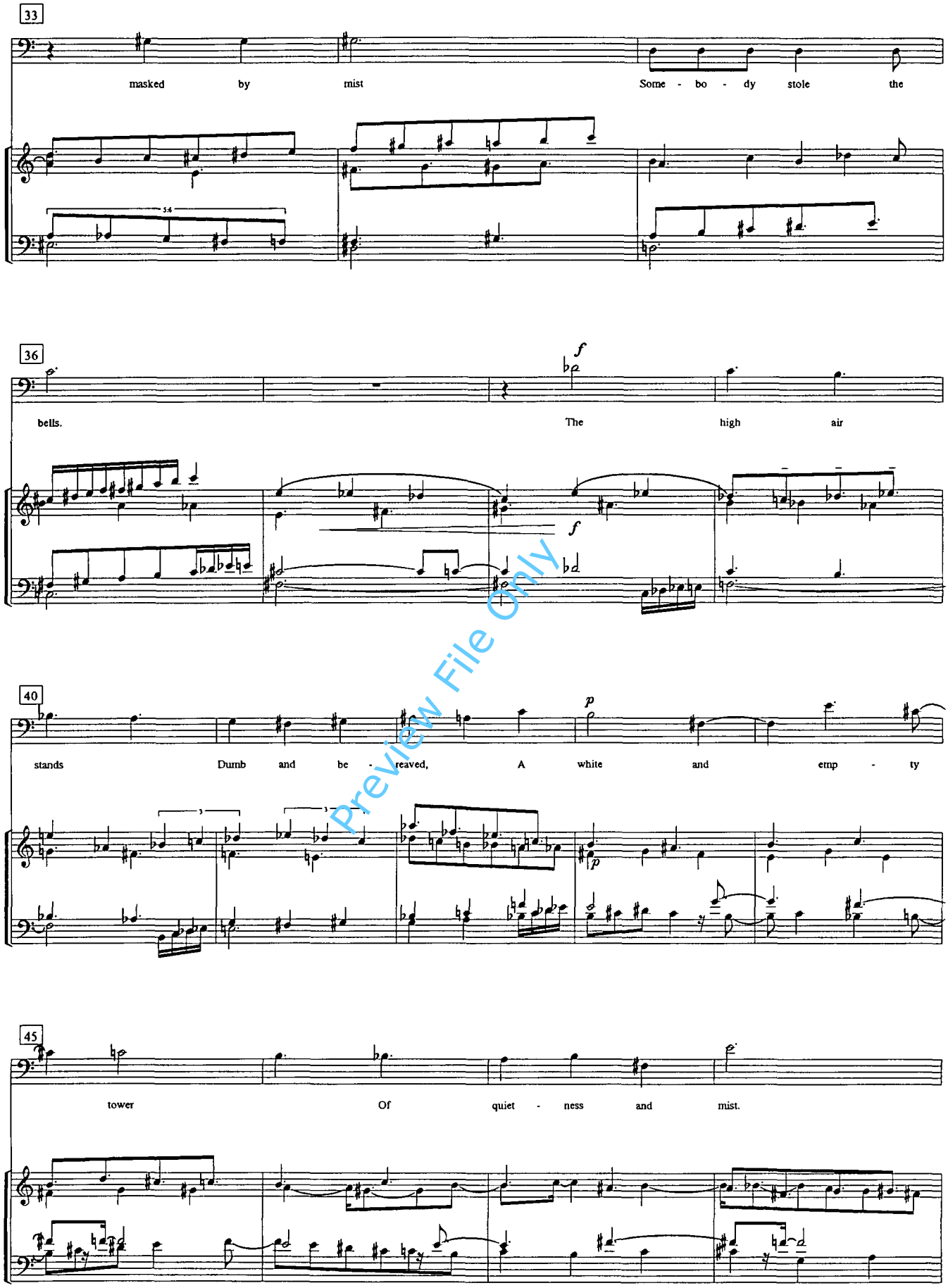

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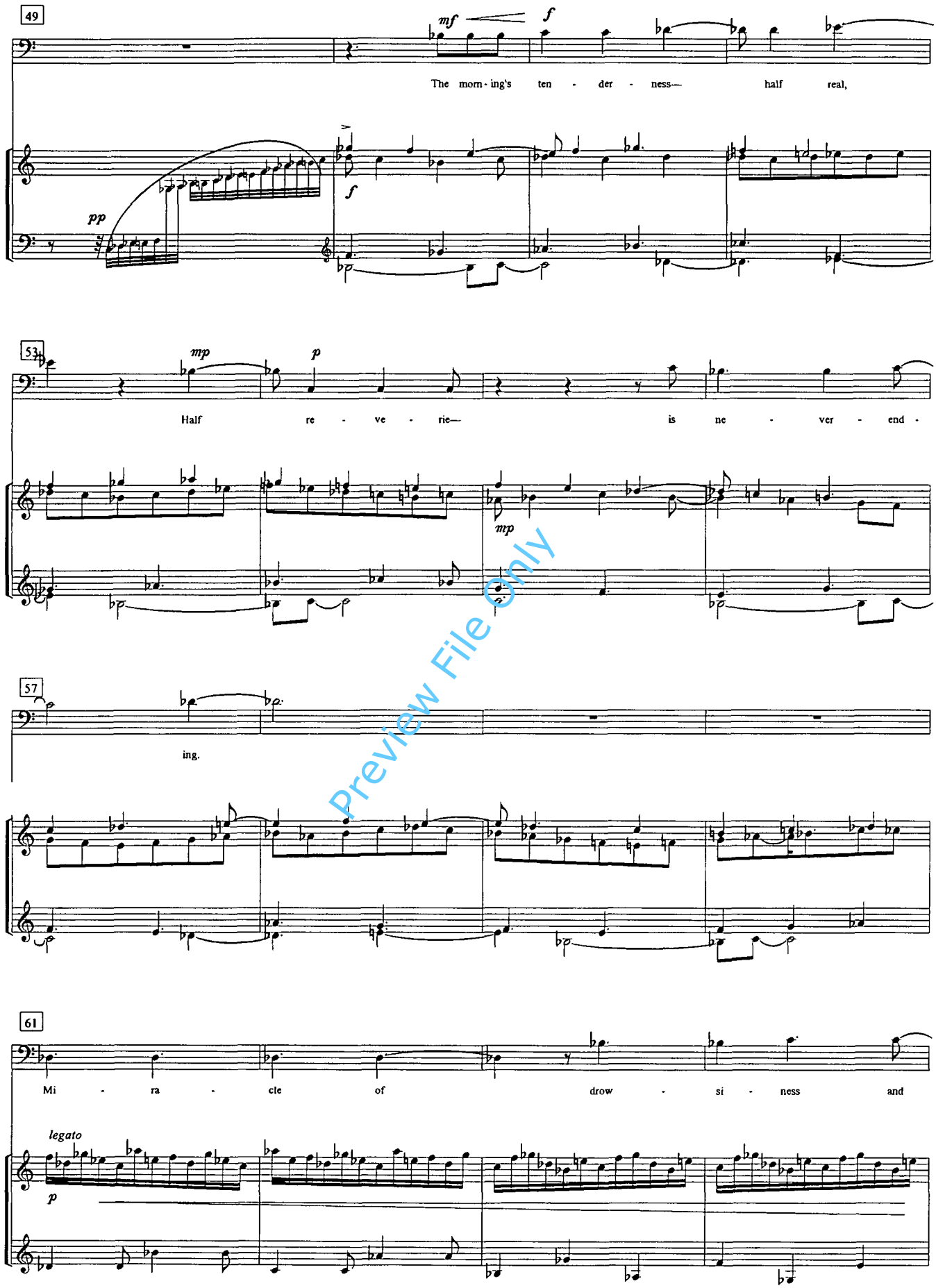

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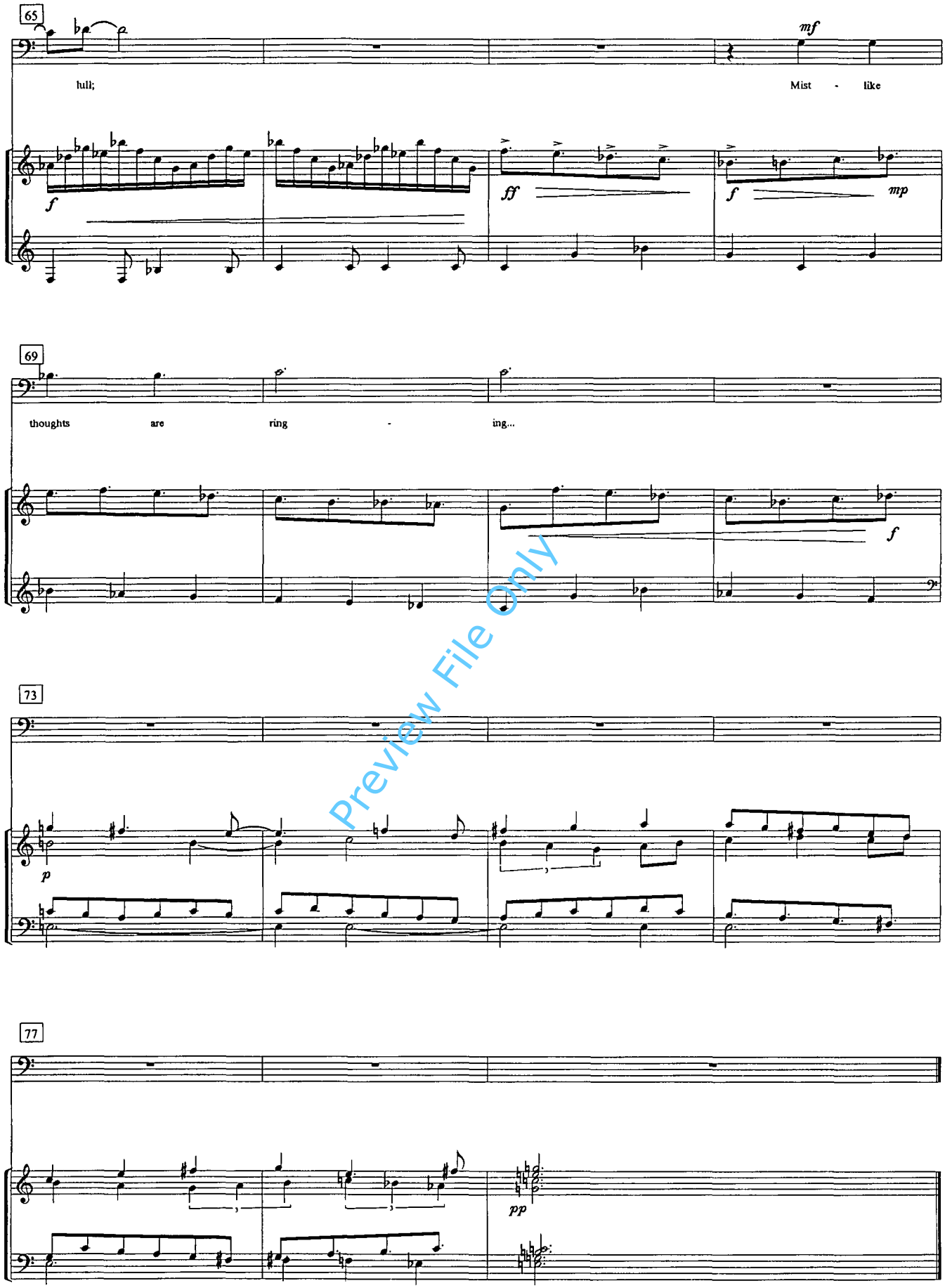

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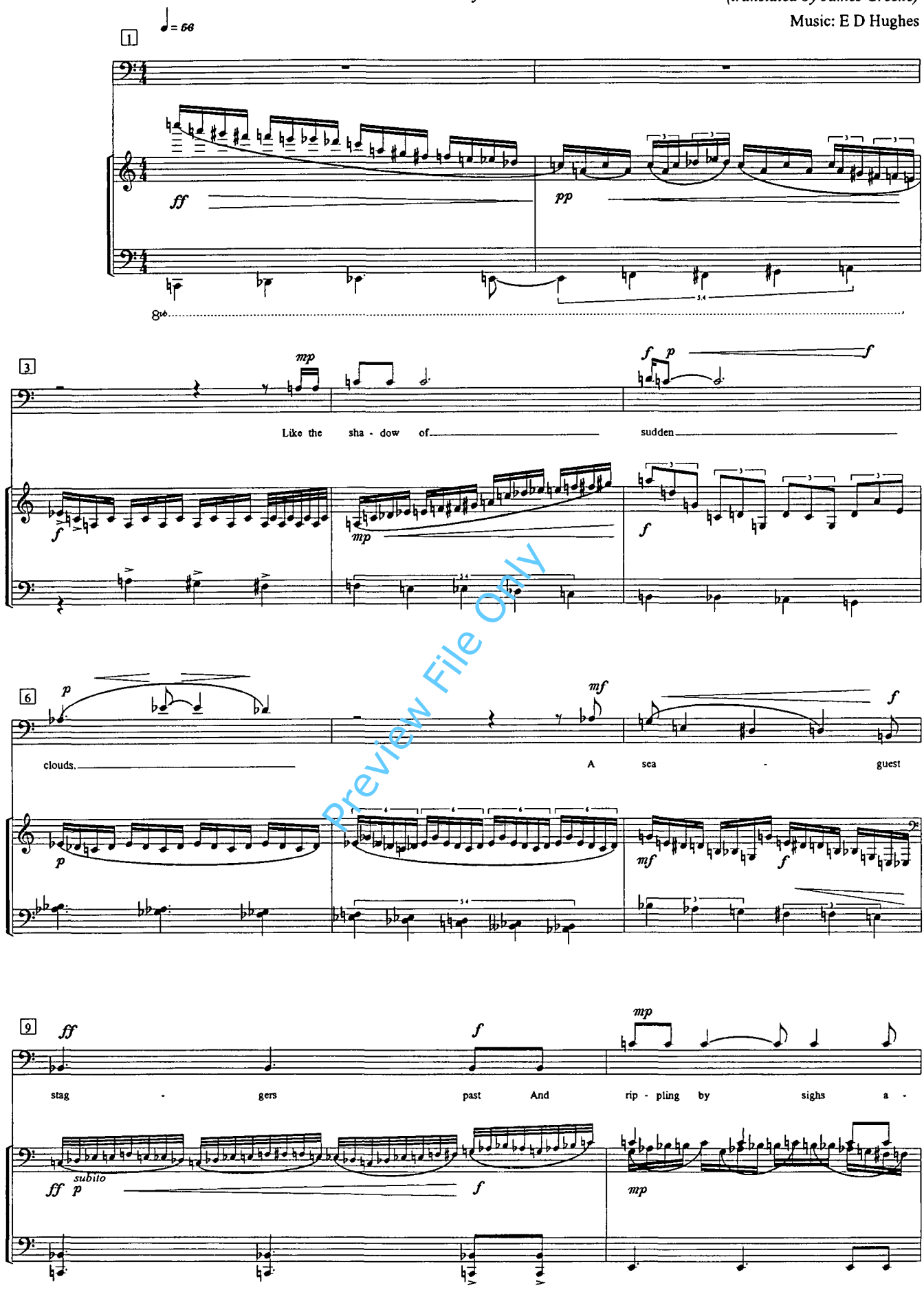
IV

Like the shadow of sudden clouds

Poem: Osip Mandelshtam
(translated by James Greene)
Music: E D Hughes



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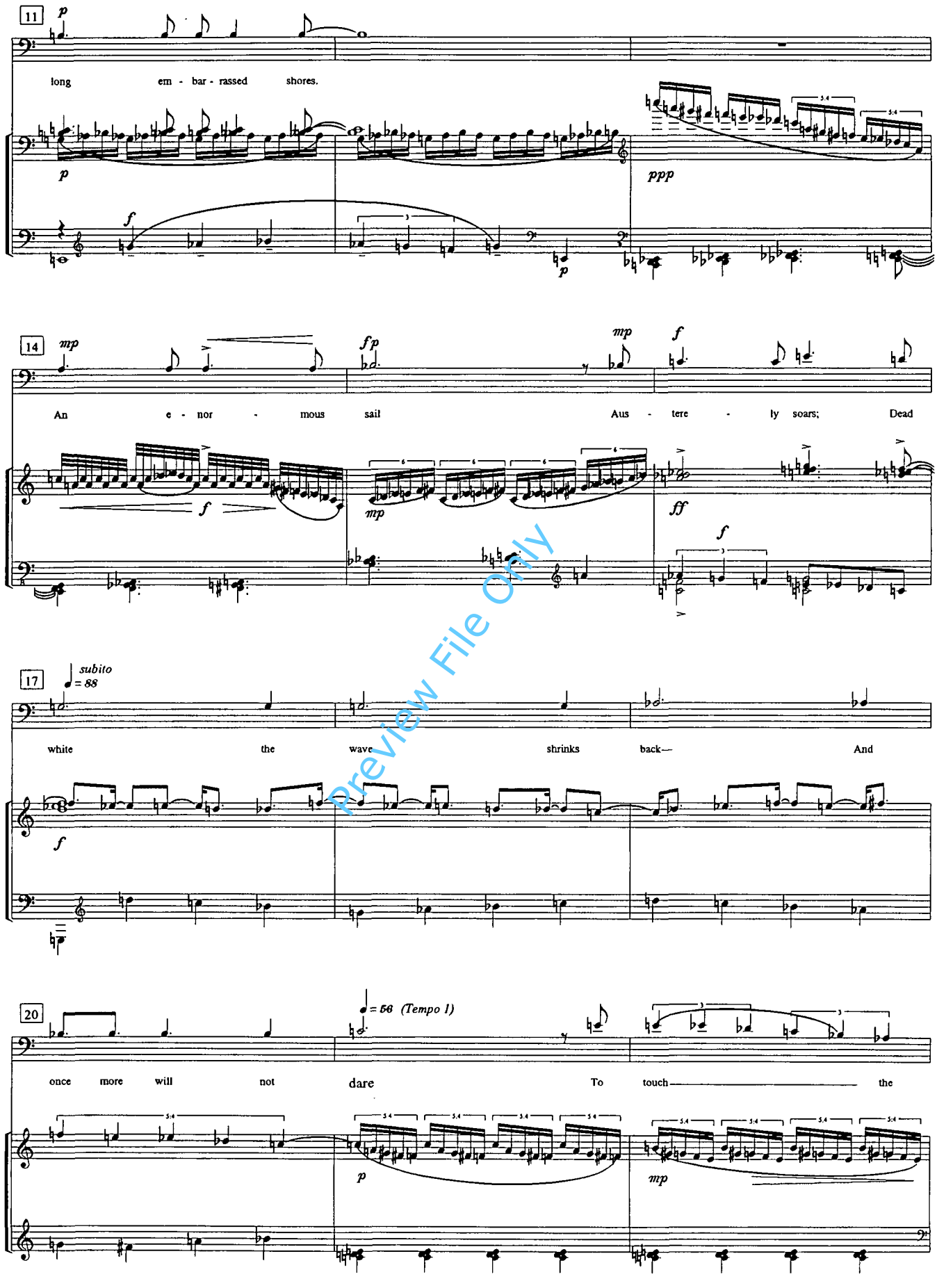

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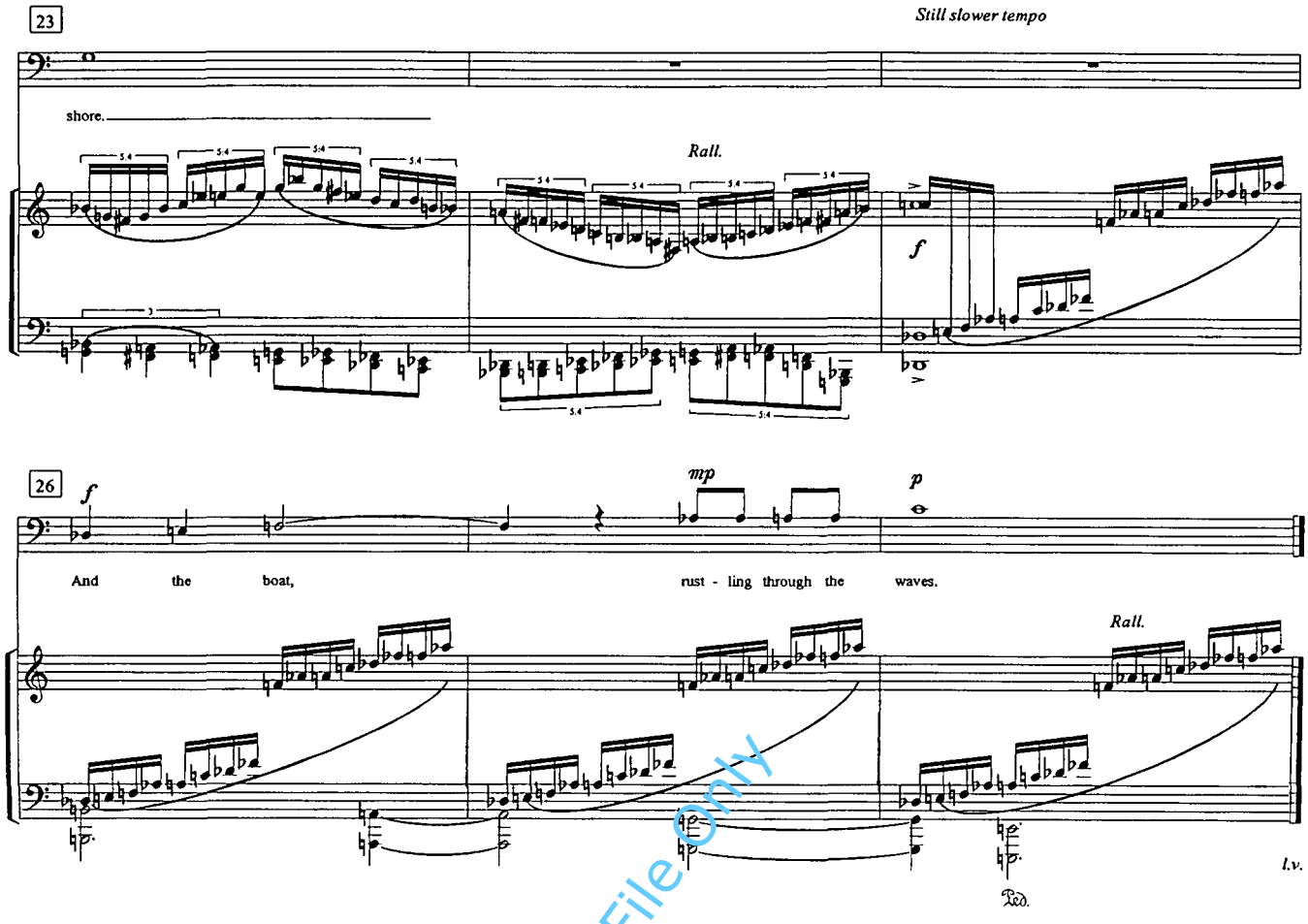

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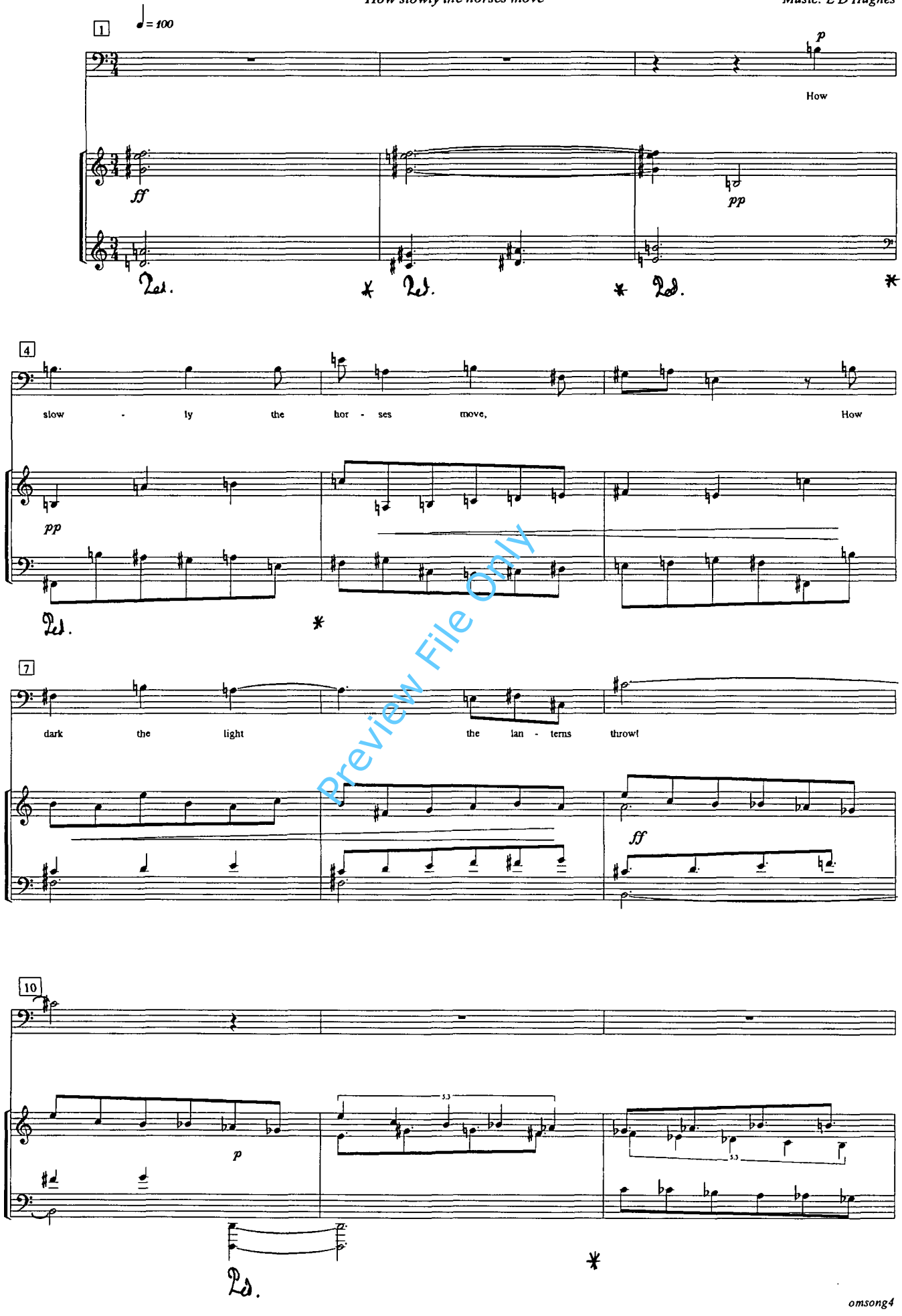
V

How slowly the horses move

Poem: Osip Mandelshtam
(translated by James Greene)
Music: E D Hughes



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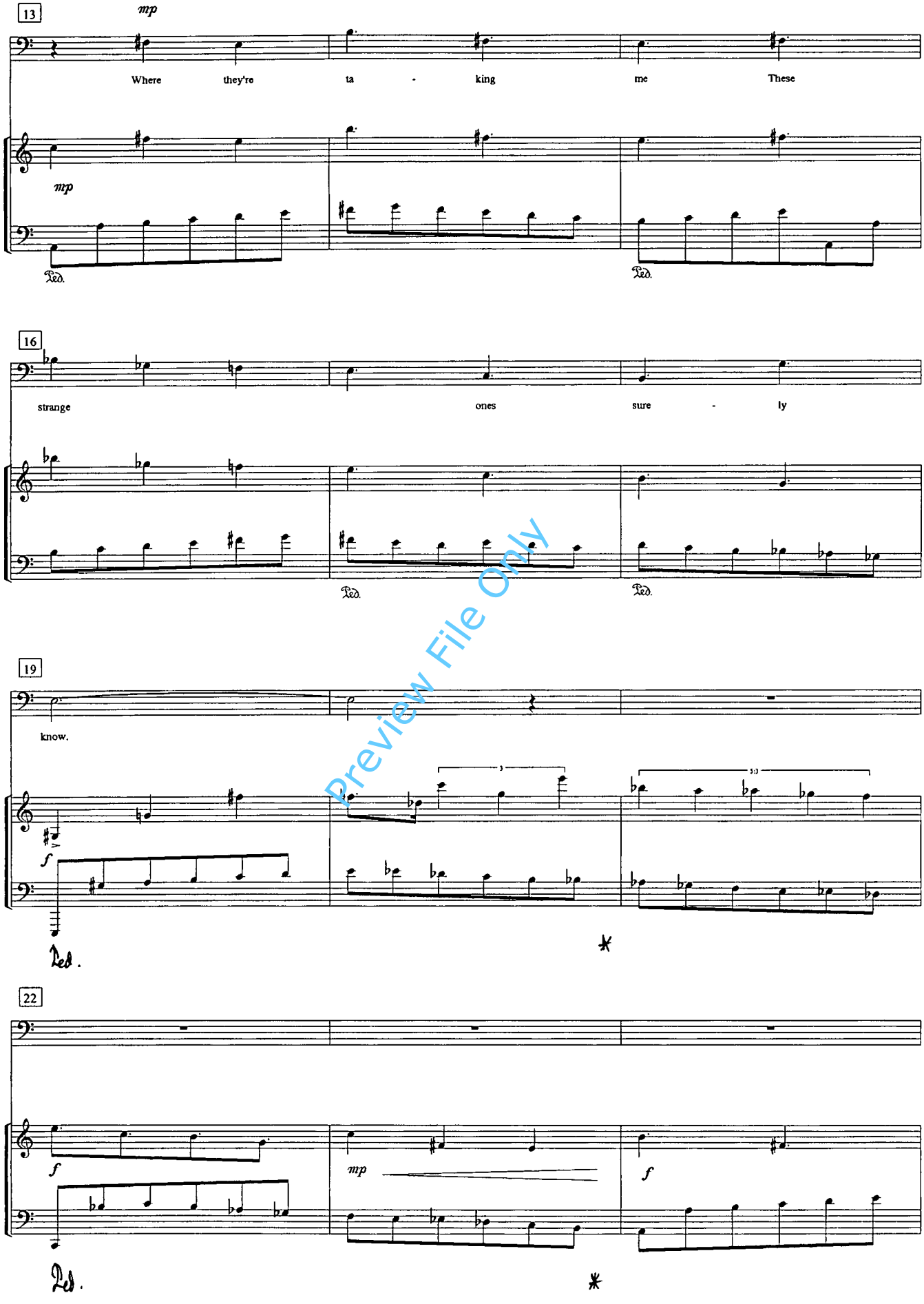

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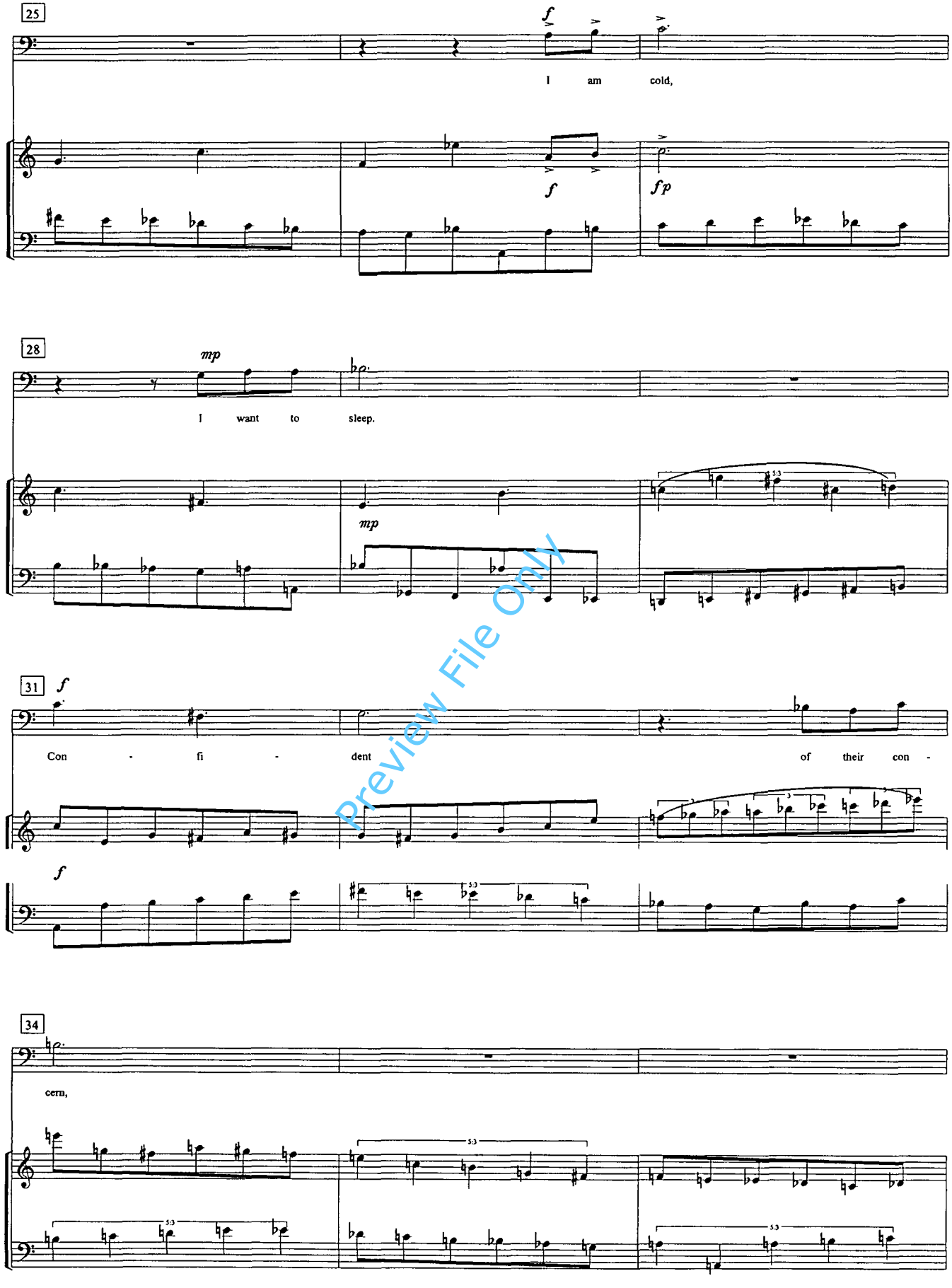

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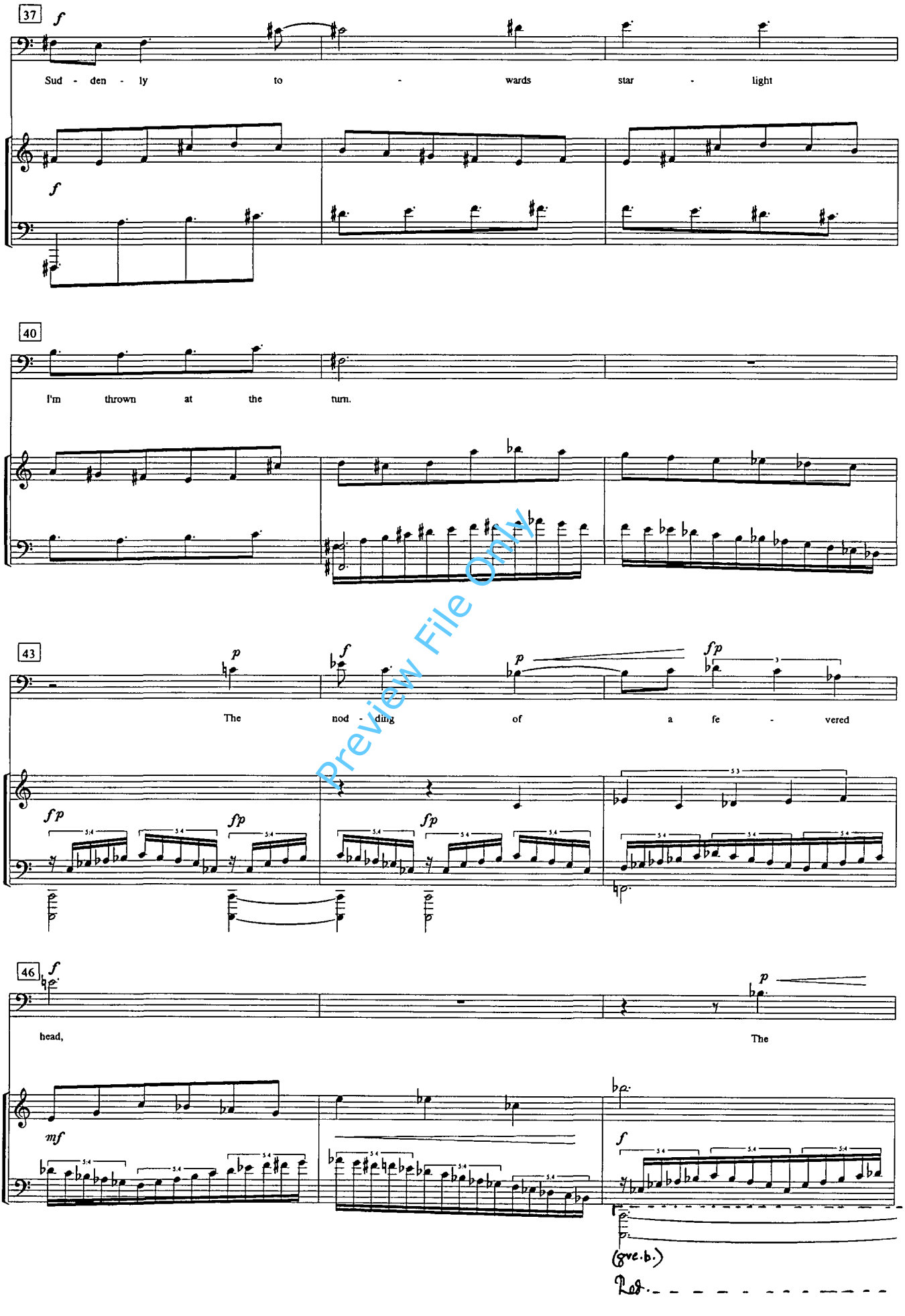

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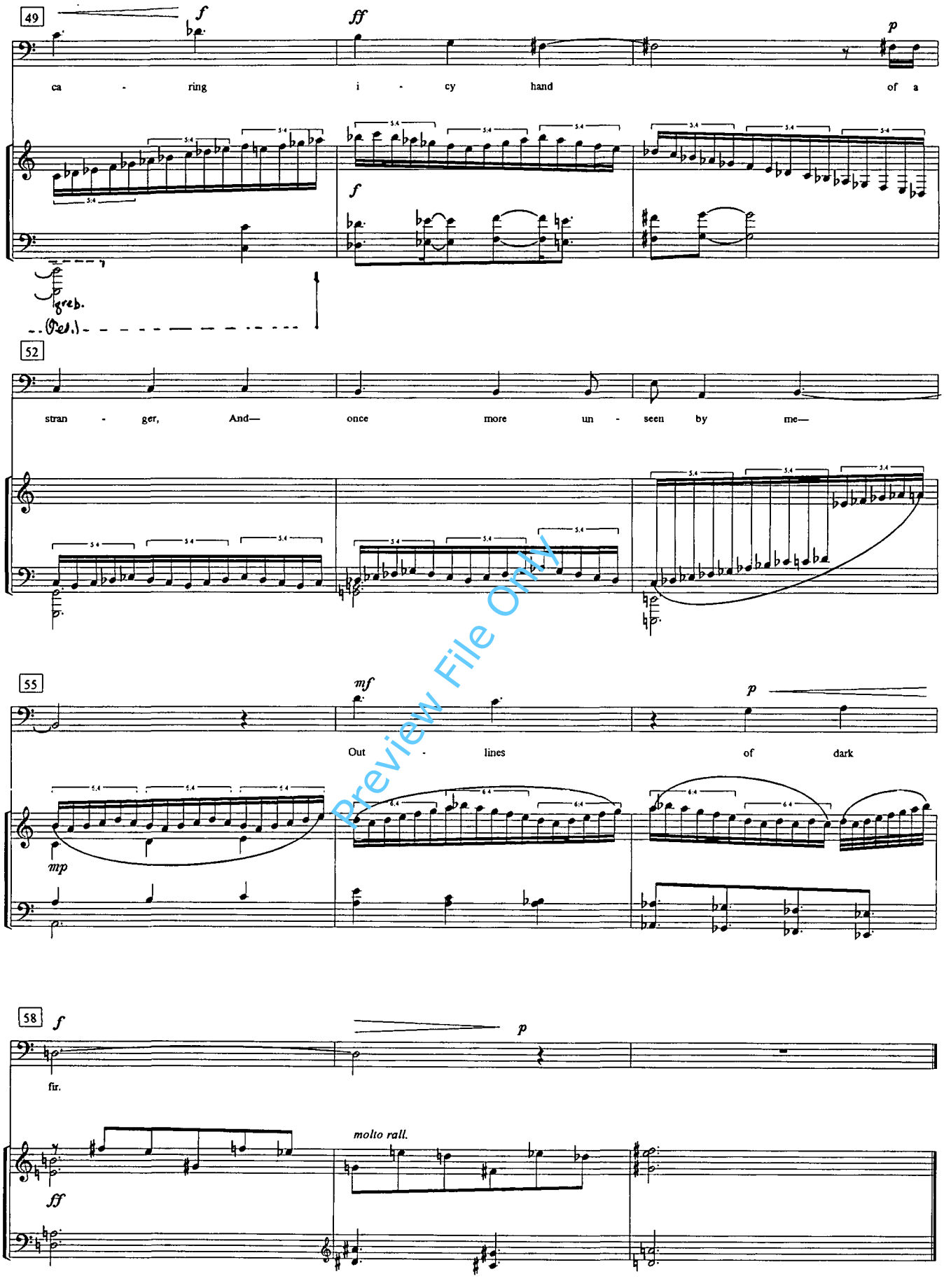

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